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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the essential skill components involved in interpersonal competence and the relationship between a deficit of such skills and loneliness. The various sections of the paper discuss the nature of loneliness, the nature of interpersonal competence, the causes of competence and incompetence, and the relationship between the development of competence and loneliness. The paper concludes that loneliness, when not situational in nature, is the result of impaired empathic and role-taking abilities and that this impairment usually originates in infancy when crucial attachment needs or role models are denied to the child, thus setting in motion a cycle of events and processes that causes a person to withdraw socially. The implications of this conceptualization for education and research are also discussed. (FL)

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INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE AND LONELINESS

The idea that persons can be competent interpersonally implies that they can also be incompetent. In assessing the value of studying interpersonal competence, we might do well to also consider the nature of interpersonal incompetence. What better way is there of knowing the value of attaining competence than to know what it means to be without it?

Intuitively, a person who is interpersonally incompetent would have difficulty initiating and maintaining intimate relationships. One would therefore expect that such persons would experience loneliness as a result. The purpose of this essay is to examine the essential skill components involved in interpersonal competence, and the relationship between a deficit of such skills and loneliness. To achieve this purpose, I will investigate the following: (1) the nature of interpersonal competence, (2) the nature of loneliness, (3) the causes of competence and incompetence, (4) the relationship between the development of competence and loneliness, and finally (5) the implications of this conceptualization for education and research.

Interpersonal Competence

Interpersonal competence is difficult to define.[1] It could be equated with social competence, and often is. And

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there is a large area of overlap between them. For the purposes of this paper I will consider several current definitions to discover the important skill components that are necessary for dyadic communicative competence.

Current conceptualizations of interpersonal communicative competence imply or explicitly state two necessary skills or abilities: the ability to adapt (synonymous with behavioral flexibility and adjustment skill) and other-orientation (synonymous with, or operationalized as empathy, role-taking ability, interpersonal perception, and interpersonal understanding). Bochner and Kelly indicate that "interpersonal competence can be judged by: (1) ability to formulate and achieve objectives; (2) ability to collaborate effectively with others; ... and (3) ability to adapt appropriately to situational or environmental variations."[2] For Weimann, communicative competence is defined as "the ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he may successfully accomplish his own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation."[3] Similarly, Knapp defines communicative competence by stressing the importance of employing "symbols appropriately adapted to the self-other-topic-situation interface in order to achieve a desired response or responses."[4] Knapp's definition appears to be influenced by what Larson

describes as "an emerging consensus" that has led to "the definition of communicative competence as: ' the ability to demonstrate a knowledge of the socially appropriate communicative behavior in a given situation.'"[5] Other definitions stress the ability to achieve interpersonal objectives.[6] However, even such goal-oriented definitions offer the skills of adaptiveness [7] and empathy[8] as the primary means to interpersonal success. According to the theoretical literature then, interpersonal communicative competence is largely an ability to empathize, take roles, and adapt.[9]

The literature on interpersonal competence does not treat empathy in either a detailed or consistent manner. For further elaboration, it was necessary to examine the literature specifically concerning empathy. In doing so, some remarkable parallels between empathy and interpersonal competence appeared. Cottrell and Dymond provide a description of empathic persons. In their exploratory study, those in

> the high empathy score group appeared to be emotionally expressive, outgoing, optimistic, warm people, who had a strong interest in others. They are flexible people ... Those low on the empathy score are rather rigid, introverted people . . . who are . . . unable to deal with concrete material and interpersonal relations very successfully.[10]

The parallel becomes clear when this finding is compared to

D'Augelli's conclusions based on a study of interpersonal skills. D'Augelli found that individuals

> who were rated by trained observers as high in interpersonal skills . . . were seen as significantly more empathetically understanding, as more honest and open with their feelings, as warmer and more accepting and . . . less set in their ways.[11]

Clearly, there is considerable congruence in skill factors associated with both empathy and interpersonal competence. Bochner and Yerby also found a strong correlation between degrees of empathic understanding and interpersonal performance scores. In their study, among the "leader behaviors measured, only empathy made a difference in the learner outcomes."[12]

The conclusion reached by Bochner and Yerby warrants special notice. In studying amounts of empathy, self-disclosure, instruction-related behavior, and management behavior, they concluded that "it is safe to assume that persons with highly developed empathic ability will be more likely to obtain these other skills easily or already possess them anyway," (p.102). It is apparent that empathic individuals are also likely to acquire interpersonal competence. Realizing that I have not yet defined empathy, it is now incumbent upon me to do so. However, empathy will be best defined in contrast to role-taking because important distinctions need to be drawn between these two constructs.

Empathy and role-taking are not easy to distinguish conceptually. Empathy has been defined synonymously with role-taking ability.[13] By imaginatively taking the role of particular others, it is assumed that one can understand, perceive, and even feel that person's emotions and cognitions. George Herbert Mead, however, conceived of role-taking as a "cognitive rather than an emotional phenomenon."[14] With this distinction, "empathy is not synonymous with role-taking . . . / In general, empathy refers to some kind of motor mimicry. Empathy does not, however, involve one's taking account of, analysis of, and adaptation to the role attributes of another as does role-taking."[15] In other words, role-taking is a mental and imaginative construction of another's role for the purposes of interactive facilitation, adaptation, and self-definition. Empathy, on the other hand, is an emotional reaction to, or affective experience of, another's emotional state. Either ability can, and often does, facilitate the other, but neither is sufficient for the other. This distinction is rarely found in the literature on interpersonal competence.

Still left to consider is the skill component labeled "adaptiveness". In examining the literature on role theory, it became obvious that the ability to adapt and adjust to the behavior of others is a fundamental outcome and benefit of role-taking ability.[16] By taking the role of another, or empathizing with another, one is often able to predict the

responses of that other to messages and communicative cues. By better understanding and predicting the role behavior of other, one can adjust communicative interaction to enhance cooperation, fluency, and interdependence. Thus, role-taking is "a cognitive activity which involves the inference of interactional cognitions held by others, a comparison of one's own cognitions with those of others, and the formulation of any of a variety of adaptations of behavior toward the others." [17] Theoretically then, adaptiveness is a result of role-taking skills. And despite the distinction between role-taking and empathy made by Stotland, et al., their research discovered that individuals "who score high on the F-E (Fantasy-Empathy) scale have been shown to tend, more than others, to imagine themselves in the position of another person.[18] So role-taking and empathic abilities are mutually supportive, and are responsible for such interpersonal skills as adaptiveness. Assuming the ability to speak and normal intelligence, high role-taking and empathic skills can thus be considered as virtually synonymous with interpersonal communicative competence.

The relationship between interpersonal competence and loneliness still has not been developed. To do this, the loneliness construct needs to be examined with an eye toward its relationship with role-taking and empathic abilities.

Loneliness

Loneliness is a difficult construct to conceptualize since it has for so long been dealt with under the guise of related,

yet distinct, aspects of human experience.[19] Recently, however, considerable progress has been made in developing a functional definition of loneliness. "There seems to be a general agreement among different investigators that loneliness is a function of an unfavorable discrepancy between the interpersonal relationships the individual perceives himself as having at the time, and the kinds of relationships he would like to have."[20] In su definitions, "loneliness reflects the relationship between two factors, the desired and achieved level of social interaction."[21] This conceptualization is global in nature. That is, it attempts to tap a general or overall perception of a person's affective or cognitive impression of loneliness. One implication of this view is that "in assessing loneliness, the person's network of social relationships must be considered. Deficiencies in any given relationship may be compensated for through other relationships."[22] This global definition implies that each individual has a somewhat constant need for human intimacy. This is an overgeneralization of the position but it serves as a point of contrast to a different position.

Several other writers have attempted to define specific forms of loneliness.[23] One of the few attempts at distinguishing different types of loneliness that has received both conceptual and empirical support is that of Weiss (1973). He identified "social" and "emotional" isolation as forms of loneliness. Both are "marked by restless depression and amorphous, unfocused dissatisfaction. But anxiety and appre-

hension dominate the loneliness of emotional isolation, while boredom together with feelings of exclusion would seem to dominate the loneliness of social isolation."[24] Although empirical support can be found for both the global and specific definitions of loneliness, Russell, Peplau and Cutrona maintain that "(d)ifferent types of loneliness may simply represent differing routes to this same experiential state. If so, then a general loneliness measure would validly assess an individual's loneliness, . . ." regardless of its causes. [25]

Weiss and others have established that loneliness is almost always a condition of negative affect.[26] Loneliness can thus be distinguished from the normal conception of isolation. Research demonstrates that loneliness and isolation are distinct phenomena.[27] Apparently, many people can, and often do, choose to be alone. For these people in these situations, isolation is a desirable condition.

Several other emotional and behavioral phenomena have been confused with loneliness. One of the more common associations has been between loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Recently however, loneliness investigators have found distinctions between these constructs. For example, Weiss notes that in "loneliness there is a drive to rid oneself of one's distress by integrating a new relationship or regaining a lost one, in depression there is instead a surrender to it."[28] Kubistant concluded, after an analysis of the literature, that

the spectrum of loneliness "should be regarded as a separate phenomenon and not automatically be subsumed under such related phenomena as depression, aggression, boredom, anxiety, or shyness."[29] And since the withdrawal of depression can theoretically lead to loneliness, and the pain of loneliness can lead to depression, distinctions have been found between depressed and nondepressed lonely people. Bragg discovered that "the nondepressed lonely were dissatisfied with both the social and nonsocial aspects of their lives."[30] This finding is compatible with Weiss' notion that depression causes one's perceptions to be negative and pessimistic generically. It also comports with the social orientation of current definitions of loneliness.

Another set of complex relationships exists among loneliness, alienation, anomie, and anomia. Alienation is more related to one's access to social structures, such as the political system, than is loneliness.[31] Anomie and anomia are closely related to each other, but not so much to loneliness. Parks operationalizes anomia according to Srole's explication, which includes five dimensions: (1) estrangement, (2) unpredictability, (3) isolation, (4) powerlessness, and (5) meaninglessness. Of the five, only isolation is likely to overlap significantly with loneliness. It is described as "a belief that one's social relationships are in the process of disintegration and that one no longer receives support from others."[32] Anomie, which Parks finds is directly correlated

with anomia, is described ambiguously "in terms of social structural characteristics which create or perpetrate isolation, the breakdown of social relations and normative systems," and as "a conflict between the various value systems encountered by the individual."[33] Because of this ambiguity, it is difficult to specify differences among loneliness, anomie, and anomia. Both anomie and anomia are broad structural characteristics of society that can lead to isolation of an individual from society in general and relational networks specifically. Loneliness, on the other hand, need not be caused by the larger social structures, or even by isolation per se, even though it can be precipitated by either.[34] So loneliness is a distinct psychological phenomenon, even though it is naturally related to numerous affective, behavioral and social conditions.

Many current explanations of loneliness rely heavily on attribution theory. Rubinstein, Shaver, and Peplau have identified three attributional dimensions:

> Locus of causality ("Am I to blame for my loneliness, or is it something in my environment?"); stability over time ("Is my loneliness transitory, or is it likely to be permanent?); and controllability (Is there anything I can do about being lonely, or is it out of my hands?") [35]

These types of attributions can help explain a paradox about loneliness. Some people are aroused by loneliness to constantly

seek out interpersonal intimacy and relationships, whereas the motivations of others are suppressed. Fromm-Reichmann attempted to resolve this paradox, arguing that the motivational effects of loneliness depend upon "the degree of a person's dependence on others for his self-orientation, and that this depends in turn on the particular vicissitudes of the developmental history." [36] This view is similar to that of Shor and Sanville, who envision an eternal conflict between a desire for absolute union with another and egocentric independence of self.[37] Certain people would be able to balance these contrary desires whereas others would not.

Attribution theory, however, interprets the paradox differently. When people attribute their loneliness to stable internal causes, they are more prone to become depressed and withdraw socially. Because they see their situation as hopeless and unlikely to change, they accept it as a burden they have to bear. They withdraw because being active cannot change things. Also, long periods of loneliness tend to cause one to perceive more stable attributions of the condition.[38] Others will attribute loneliness to such origins as the immediate situation, in which case, these persons might be motivated to find another situation and diminish their loneliness.

The Causes of Loneliness

The actual causes of loneliness are numerous and difficult to specify. Peplau and Perlman argue that the causes of loneli-

ness can be classified into two broad sets: precipitating events and predisposing factors. Precipitating factors include changes in achieved and desired social relations. Experiences that precipitate loneliness by affecting the achieved level of social relations are the breakup or end of a relationship, status changes, and "reduced satisfaction in the qualitative aspects of one or more relationships. . ."[39] Our desired level of relational intimacy can be affected by normative standards (e.g., peer pressure for dating relationships in high school) and stages of life cycle development. The factors likely to predispose the experience of loneliness are personal characteristics such as "shyness, low social risk-taking, lack of assertiveness, self-consciousness in social situations . . ." low self-esteem, unattractiveness, and social skill deficits.[40] All of these qualities can impair one's ability to establish and maintain relationships. The relationship between incompetence and loneliness is implied strongly by these types of deficiencies. But to understand the origin and development of such deficiencies, it is necessary to consider two potentially compatible theories. Both psychoanalytic and social-psychological theories offer explanations for the development and impairment of interpersonal competence.

Psychoanalytic theory centers many of its assumptions in the realm of childhood development. In infancy, the child displays signs of attachment (e.g., dependence), even as early as

six months after birth. At this early stage, the infant's well-being is dependent upon the mother's proximity.[41] According to Shor and Sanville, this stage of primary attachment is an experience of unconscious euphoria for the child. The infant, in first occasions of primary gratification, glimpses a global state of paradise, free of pain or strain; he samples a blissfulness in both his elemental feeling of self and his primordial sense of home."[42] This initial sense of euphoria is unconsciously remembered throughout life as a primary illusion. It is a primary illusion because we seek to return to the original ideal state of bliss, but we can never leave the realm of the social once we have entered it. In short, humans crave the conflicting goals of autonomy (i.e., self-contained bliss) and interdependence (i.e., social intimacy). The total achievement of either objective is necessarily elusive, and hence illusionary.

The child's initial bliss is soon shattered. "The infant, after early glimpses of absolute happiness, in the primary illusion, suffers inevitable fall from grace. Biological forces and surrounding resources cannot match perfectly. The best of mothers will fail her baby at times."[43] Weiss also envisions a failing of a primary illusion when "in adolescence, parents are relinquished as attachment figures. Then it is possible for individuals to scan their social worlds for attachment and see only unsatisfactory friendly acquaintances."[44] To gratify the need felt for the loss of primary gratification, the infant is forced to reach out, adjust, and relate to the environment.

To compensate for the failing of the primary illusion, the child seeks to develop social skills. "New capacities and skills are acquired to bridge the basic faults; damaged trusting and self-doubt."[45] According to Shor and Sanville there are three basic abilities that the child begins to develop; communication, participation, and identification. "The quality of intimacy experienced by each person at any state of life is a variable composite of these three processes . . ." (p. 38). Identification, in its ideal form, "leads to constructive empathy . . . based on the capacity to imagine the whole texture of the other's experience" (p.40). Participation is a personal sense of "having the same experience psychologically and even physiologically in joint activities that makes shared involvement contribute to intimacy. . ." (p. 40). Communication involves the sharing of meanings with respected others so as to enhance the sense of identification and participation. (p.41-42). All three of these skills clearly involve empathy and role-taking. Under this theory then, we all develop the interpersonal skills of empathy, role-taking, and communication to vicariously experience the intimacy of others, since we have lost the total intimacy with and within ourselves. The primary illusion can be considered a first principle of motivation for the development of interpersonal skills.

The development of interpersonal skills is not equivalent

for all persons. Social-psychological theory can help to explain how differences in interpersonal competence occur. The developmental aspects of role-taking and empathic processes have received considerable attention in research and theory.[46] Apparently, infants begin to mimic, then imitate, then "play at", then fantasize, and finally take the role of significant others in the family. This process takes place over the period of time that the infant develops into early adolescence. The child learns to take the roles of family members to understand their gestures, language, and actions. The family also takes an active stance in teaching the child these skills through reinforcement, reward, and association.

The attachment to family, especially the mother, grows very strong.[47] In normal development the child evolves from an egocentric state into a state of being able to communicate with and to take the role of others. This is the first stage of socialization. It is only through continual interaction that these skills are developed. Also, when the child begins to relinquish the parents as primary attachment figures, peers become important as surrogate attachment figures. In childhood, the world of peers is the world of play, make-believe, imagination, fantasy, and thus, role-taking. Through the association with family and peers, the child begins to develop role-taking and empathic abilities, which are the primary skills of interpersonal competence.

When a developmental history goes awry, however, serious

damage can be done to the child's role-taking and empathic abilities. This damage can result from several aspects of a "bad" childhood. First, should the loss of an attachment figure occur due to death, divorce, negligence, abuse, etc., the child would lose the significant other that is so vital as a role model. Role models provide the human objective toward which infants learn to aspire.[48] This aspiration, a remnant of the primary illusion, prompts the child to "model" him or herself after the significant other. The loss of this significant other would remove an important source of role-taking and empathic interaction. If the loss occurs early enough in infancy, the child's primary illusion would never be experienced to its fullest. The result would be a diminished desire to identify, participate, and communicate.[49]

Second, just the verbal conflict, anger, and fighting involved in an unhealthy family atmosphere could frighten the child so as to cause a withdrawal within. In an environment where no one else is satisfying to talk to, the child might begin to talk to self, engaging in a continual self dialogue.[50]

Either process can result in prolonged or permanent egocentrism. Egocentrism entails either an inability or an unwillingness to empathize with ~~any~~ or take the role of other. The result would be interpersonal incompetence.

> To the extent that the child fails to discriminate those role attributes of the other which are relevant to the sort of message

> the child should send to the other, . . . to that extent is the message likely to be ill-adapted to the other's informational needs and hence, inadequately communicative.[51]

Were this the case, the initiation, development, and maintenance of important relationships might be very difficult to attain.[52] Yet the illusion still remains, or at least some level of need for human intimacy. Thus, a desired level of intimacy exists.[53] But due to impaired communicative skills and competence, the achieved level of intimacy is likely to be unsatisfactory. Indeed, research has repeatedly demonstrated a close relationship between perceptions of bad childhood family relations and the experience of loneliness.[54] Roundabout then, psychoanalytic and social-psychological theories have now brought us from birth, to illusion, to competence and incompetence, and finally to the definition of loneliness.

The process of attribution also affects the development of loneliness. The egocentric individual does not communicate well with others. Others are not prone to enjoy interaction with such an individual,[55] and thus are likely to avoid intimacy or even frequent interaction with this person. Numerous studies have found that our opinions of ourselves are largely dependent upon our perceptions of other's perceptions of ourselves.[56] Even without astute empathic or role-taking ability, it seems likely that the egocentric person will recognize this social rejection. To the extent that this

rejection and resulting isolation is continued, the individual is likely to attribute the situation to a self-trait. This attribution can be reflexive as well, since others tend to attribute the person's lack of sociability to a character trait. These outcomes are consistent with the findings that people underestimate the importance of situational causes, that poor relationship networks are associated with internal stable attributions, and that "duration of loneliness is related to internality of attributions."[57] A cycle of loneliness is thus entrenched.[58] The person becomes vulnerable in the first place, because of childhood relational deficits or attachment loss. Then the person experiences difficulty relating socially and intimately. Next, others begin to shun interaction with this individual. Finally, the person believes that s/he is simply fated to be lonely. A self-fulfilling prophecy is accepted without a struggle.

Obviously, much of this conceptualization is purely conjectural. Only scant research exists to support the thesis that impaired role-taking and empathic abilities lead to loneliness and/or the susceptibility to loneliness. Apparently the only research that has directly linked the constructs of interpersonal competence and loneliness has been conducted by Vello Sermat and Warren Jones. Although Sermat entitles his research with "interpersonal competence," he is measuring only an aptitude for taking social risks. Accordingly,

this would entail only one aspect of the entire spectrum of communicative competence. The primary factors involved appear to be empathy and role-taking, and not social risk-taking. Jones has studied competence as operationalized in conversational manners. These are probably tapping into communicative competence, and it is significant that one of his studies "indicated that lonely subjects reported being more self-focused and less empathic in various social situations."[59]

Other than these scant research efforts, little has been done that is directly relevant. Wood studied self-disclosure and loneliness, but collapsed disclosure into a form of social risk-taking.[60] A study in England conducted by the Women's Group on Public Welfare concluded that "(o)ne of the deepest causes of loneliness is the inability to communicate."[61] But their study sheds no light on the processes and specific relationships involved. So there is a general lack of empirical work on the possible relationships between interpersonal communicative competence and loneliness. In addition, little theoretical effort has been applied to this area.

Research Implications

There is obviously a need for additional research if we are to understand the complex relationships involved in role-taking, empathy, interpersonal competence, and loneliness. The most obvious research implications of this essay are that

individuals high in empathic and role-taking abilities will be significantly more interpersonally competent and significantly less lonely than individuals low in empathic and role-taking abilities. Several other relationships appear in the communication literature.

Self Esteem and Assertiveness

Several studies have found correlations between measures of loneliness and self esteem.[62] This is compatible with the prediction that the developmental history of interpersonally incompetent individuals is likely to be disturbed. An unhealthy family atmosphere is damaging to the self-concept of children in their formative years. Favorable cues may not receive favorable responses. Creative and assertive behavior may be perceived by the family members as either unimportant or threatening to their traditional role set. As a result, the individual is not motivated to develop empathic and role-taking abilities. Later in life, when these skills are needed to facilitate communicative interaction, they are inadequate for the task. Rejection is perceived from the social environment and the self esteem suffers further setback. Without the confidence and certainty offered by strong self esteem, assertive communicative behavior becomes too risky to the self-concept. Social risk-taking is avoided with the effect of limiting the level of achieved relationships.[63]

Other testable relationships might be derived from Prisbell's construct of "feeling good," which is similar to self esteem and conceptually related to interpersonal intimacy, depth, and breadth of social penetration.[64]

Communication Apprehension

The finding that lonely individuals are unlikely to engage in social risk-taking implies a fear of public communication in addition to a general reluctance to communicate socially. Nerviano and Gross studied the personality traits of a population of alcoholics, and described those with high loneliness scores as "interpersonally inhibited, . . . more suspicious, more apprehensive, . . . and more tense."[65] Russell, et al., found that lonely "students were also more likely to describe themselves as 'shy' . . . and to rate themselves less 'attractive' . . ."[66] It seems obvious, then that lonely individuals would be apprehensive about communicative encounters. Communication apprehension is "defined as an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (McCroskey,1977)."[67] The origin of communication apprehension is believed to "lie primarily in a child's experiences during the formative years."[68] According to a review of the literature by Burgoon, unwillingness-to-communicate is related to anomia, anomie, introversion, and low self esteem.[69] Similar findings are reported by McCroskey in 1978.[70]

Communication Satisfaction

Loneliness is commonly found to be correlated with "indices of anxiety, depression, hostility, shyness and self-consciousness and inversely with self-esteem, assertiveness, social inclusion, affection, and purpose-in-life." [71] Consistent with these perspectives, the research by Russell, et al, found that "loneliness scale scores were associated with low self-ratings of 'satisfaction' . . . and being 'happy' . . ."[72] Similarly, "depressed lonely were found to be less satisfied than the nondepressed lonely with both the social and non-social aspects of life."[73] Since one of the major facets of social interaction is undoubtedly communicative in nature, lonely individuals are likely to be dissatisfied with their communicative transactions. "Satisfaction is typically conceived of as the affective response to the fulfillment of expectation-type standards . . . and symbolizes an enjoyable, fulfilling experience."[74] Hecht reasons that interpersonal competence is related to satisfaction. This is based on "the assumption that communicators will generally be satisfied with effective interactions."[75] And in a somewhat related construct, Bohart, et al., found that skill training in warmth, empathy, genuiness and helping skills "leads to an increase in an individual's social comfort, or the degree to which he/she is perceived as being comfortable to be around."[76]

Further Implications

A final implication for theory and research should be noted. Interpersonal competence and loneliness are easily conceived of as traits. Although I have suggested the possibility of trait-like proclivities to the conditions of competence, incompetence, and loneliness, they become clearly active only in relational contexts. If these states and traits do reflect certain correlates of communicative behavior, then it is important to know how these behaviors affect relational communication and development. Intuitively, I suspect that empathy, role-taking ability, competence, and even loneliness possess both general and particular characteristics. For example, individuals may be generally incompetent in communicative ability, yet extremely competent in particular relationships. Further research is necessary to discover if these states and traits do reflect general and relational characteristics.

Some of these relationships have already been studied, but not within a theoretical framework of interpersonal competence. Any lack of study is no longer due to a lack of measurement instruments. A number of scales exist to measure role-taking,[77] empathy,[78] interpersonal competence,[79] and loneliness.[80] In short, the resources for testing the ideas presented in this paper are readily available.

The pedagogical importance of understanding the relationship between loneliness and other communication constructs is

seen in the implications of various recent research findings. According to one national poll, 26% of the people surveyed stated they had recently been lonely.[81] More salient is the finding that loneliness is a more significant problem among young people, especially college students, than among the aged.[82] Although I do not mean to imply a relationship, it is significant to note the conclusion of Tortoriello and Phelps in 1975. They concluded that traditional college courses in interpersonal communication are apparently ineffective at teaching actual interpersonal skills.[83] A better understanding of interpersonal competence could help to improve this condition. And just possibly, a curriculum that teaches interpersonal skills effectively will help to prevent the significance of loneliness among the youth and the college population.

NOTES

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[3]John M. Weimann,"Explication and Test of a Model of Communicative Competence," Human Communication Research, 3 (Spring, 1977), p. 198.

[4]Mark L. Knapp, "Social Intercourse: From Greeting to Goodbye"(Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 275.

[5]Carl E. Larson, "Problems in Assessing Functional Communication," Communication Education, 27 (Nov. 1978) p. 305.

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[8]See Eugene Weinstein, "The Development of Interpersonal Competence," in Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research, Ed. David A. Goslinx (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969; Rpt 1973) pp. 753-775.

[9]These skills are also reflected in the definition of interpersonal competence offered by Donald P. Cushman and Robert T. Craig, "Communication Systems: Interpersonal Implications" in Explorations in Interpersonal Communication, ed. Gerald R. Miller (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976), V, p. 55. It is also possible to find the direct correlates of these skills in the operationalizations of Bochner and Kelly (pp. 289-291); and Weimann (p. 197); and in John L. Holland and Leonard L. Baird, "An Interpersonal Competency Scale," Educational and Psychological Measurement, 28 (1968),p. 503; and Millard J. Bienvenu Sr., "An Interpersonal Communication Inventory," Journal of Communication, 2 (December 1971), p. 383.

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[11]Anthony R. D'Augelli, "Group Composition Using Interpersonal Skills: An Analogue Study on the Effects of Member's Interpersonal Skills on Peer Ratings and Group Cohesiveness," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30 (1973), p. 533.

[12]Arthur P. Bochner and J. Yerby, "Factors Affecting Instruction in Interpersonal Competence," Communication Education, 26 (March 1977), p. 101.

[13]See Rosalind F. Dymond, "A Preliminary Investigation of the Relation of Insight and Empathy," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 12 (July-August 1948); R.F. Dymond, "A Scale For The Measurement of Empathic Ability," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 13 (April 1949); R. F.Dymond, "Personality and Empathy," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 14 (1950); R. F. Dymond, A.S. Hughes, and V.L. Raabe, "Measurable Changes in Empathy with Age," Journal of Consulting Psychology, 16, (1952); Arnold M. Rose, "A Systematic Summary of Symbolic Interaction Theory," in Human Behavior and Social Process: An Interactionist Approach, ed. A. M. Rose, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 7; and Weinstein,p. 757.

[14]George Herbert Mead,"Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist," ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934; rept. 1974),p.7.

[15]Robert L. Kelly, W. J. Osborne, Clyde Hendrick "Role-taking and Role-playing in Human Communication," Human Communication Research,1 (Fall 1974), p. 67. This same distinction is made by Ezra Stotland, Kenneth E. Mathews, Jr., Stanley E. Sherman, Robert O. Hansonn, and Barbara Z. Richardson, Empathy, Fantasy and Helping, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978), pp. 12-15.

[16]B. Aubrey Fisher, Perspectives on Human Communication, (New York: MacMillan, 1978), Ch.6.

[17]Kelly, et al., p. 72.

[18]Stotland, et al., p. 88.

[19]Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, "Loneliness," Psychiatry, 22 (February 1959).

[20]Vello Sermat, "Satisfaction in Different Types of Interpersonal Relationships, Willingness to Take Social Risks, and Loneliness," (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979), p. 1.

[21]Daniel Perlman and Letitia Anne Peplau, "Toward A Social Psychology of Loneliness," (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979), p. 3.

[22]Perlman and Peplau, "Social Psychology," p. 4.

[23]See Michael J. Belcher, "The Measurement of Loneliness: A Validation Study of the Belcher Extended Loneliness Scale (BELS)," DAI, 35 (August 1974), 1035B (Illinois Institute of Technology); Rosalee Bradley, "Measuring Loneliness," DAI 30 (January 1970), 3382B (Washington State); and James C. Spengler, "A Phenomenological Explication of Loneliness," DAI, 36 (July 1976), 7735A (Southern Illinois University).

[24]Robert S. Weiss, Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1970),p. 148. Empirical Support for Weiss' categories can be found in Carin M. Rubinstein and Phillip Shaver, "A Factor-Analytic Exploration of the Experience of Adult Loneliness." (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979).

[25]Dan Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Carolyn Cutrona, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Studying Loneliness," (Preliminary Report distributed at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979), pp. 3-4. Considering the amount of empirical support for the UCLA global scale, this conclusion by Russell, et al., appears sound. See Craig W. Ellison and Raymond F. Paloutzian, "Developing an Abbreviated Loneliness Scale;" and Cecilia H. Solano, "Two Measures of Loneliness: A Comparison," (Papers presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979.)

[26]See Weiss, pp. 15, 228; Ben Mijusckovic, "Loneliness: An Interdisciplinary Approach," Psychiatry, 40 (May 1977); Perlman and Peplau, "Social Psychology," p. 4; Fromm-Reichmann, p. 3; Harry Stack Sullivan, "The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry, (New York: Norton, 1953),p. 290.

[27]Claude S. Fischer and Susan L. Phillips, "Who Is Alone? Social Characteristics of People with Small Networks," and Linda A. Wood, "Social-psychological Correlates of Loneliness," (Papers presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979).

[28]Weiss,p. 15.

[29]Thomas M. Kubistant, "A Synthesis of the Aloneness/ Loneliness Phenomenon: A Counseling Perspective," DAI, 38 (October 1977) 1892A (Northern Illinois University). See also the conclusions of Dan Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau and Carolyn Cutrona, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Studying Loneliness," (Unpublished preliminary report, (Cotober 1978), pp. 304.

[30]Martin Bragg, "A Comparison of Nondepressed and Depressed Loneliness,: (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979) p. 5.

[31]This distinction is implied in the report by Solano, p.11.

[32]Malcolm R.Parks, "Anomia and Close Friendship Communication Networks," Human Communication Research, 4 (Fall 1977), p. 48.

[33]Parks, pp. 48-49.

[34]Belcher's scale intending to measure many forms of loneliness, found in a factor analysis eight factors that explained 80% of the common variance, which were: Pathological Loneliness, Alienation, Loneliness Anxiety, Existential Loneliness, Estrangement, Anomie, Loneliness Depression, and Separateness (p1035B). It is important to note, however, that Solano's comparison of the Belcher scale and the UCLA scale found the best correlation between them when the Anomie and Existential categories were dropped. This meant that the two scales were at that point, "measuring a lack of social interaction and communication." (p. 11).

[35]Carin Rubinstein, Phillip Shaver, and Letitia Anne Peplau, "Loneliness," Human Nature, February 1979, p. 63.

[36]Fromm-Reichmann, p. 7.

[37]Joel Shor and Jean Sanville, Illusion in Loving: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Evolution of Intimacy and Autonomy (Los Angeles: Double Helix Press, 1978), p. 2.

[38]This discussion is indebted to the Rubenstein, Shaver and Peplau article in Human Nature.

[39]Letitia Anne Peplau and Daniel Perlman, "Blueprint for a Social Psychological Theory of Loneliness," (Paper distributed at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979), pp.5-8.

[40]Peplau and Perlman, "Blueprint," p. 7.

[41]Weiss, p. 91.

[42]Shor and Sanville, p. 121.

[43]Shor and Sanville, p. 122.

[44]Weiss, p. 90.

[45]Shor and Sanville, p. 123.

[46]Helene Borke, "Interpersonal Perception of Young Children: Egocentrism or Empathy?" Developmental Psychology, 5 (1971):

Melvin H. Feffer, "The Cognitive Implications of Role-Taking Behavior," Journal of Personality, 28, (December 1960) p. 394; John H. Flavell, Patricia B. Botkin, Charles L. Fry Jr., Paul E. Jarvis, and John W. Wright, The Development of Role-Taking and Communication Skills in Children, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968); and Dean E. Hewes and Dorcas Evans, "Three Theories of Egocentric Speech: A Contrastive Analysis," Communication Monographs, 43 (March 1978); Barbara J. O'Keefe, Jesse G. Delia, and Daniel J. O'Keefe, "Construct Individuality, Cognitive Complexity, and the Formation and Remembering of Interpersonal Impressions," Social Behavior and Personality, 5 (1977); and Ellen M. Ritter, "Social Perspective-Taking Ability, Cognitive Complexity and Listener-Adapted Communication in Early and Late Adolescence," Communication Monographs, 46 (March 1979).

[47]Weiss, p. 90.

[48]Morris Rosenberg, "Which Significant Others?" in Linking Social Structure and Personality, ed. G. H. Elder, Jr., (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973).

[49]Much of this discussion on the developmental aspects of childhood was gleaned from discussion by Dean C. Barnlund, Interpersonal Communication: Survey and Studies, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), pp. 161-164; and Kelly, et al.

[50]This point is partially supported by Dymond, "Investigation," pp. 232-233; and by James C. McCroskey, "Oral Communication Apprehension: A Summary of Recent Theory and Research, "Human Communication Research, 4 (Fall 1977) p. 80.

[51]Flavell, p.8.

[52]Knapp provides a clear picture of how important proper communication is to the development and maintenance of intimate relationships.

[53]Fromm-Reichman, p. 13.

[54]Raymond F. Paloutzian and Craig W. Ellison, "Emotional, Behavioral and Physical Correlates of Loneliness,"(Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979); and Phillip Shaver and Carin M. Rubenstein, "The Effects of Parental Attachment and Loss During Childhood on Subsequent Adult Loneliness, Self-esteem and Health," (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979).

[55]The evidence on this point is contradictory. Jones found that even though lonely individuals are more negative about themselves and others in dyadic interactions, they are not differentially perceived by non-lonely individuals in the interactions;

Warren H. Jones, J. E. Freemon, and Ruth Ann Goswick, "The Persistence of Loneliness Self and Other Rejection?, " (Unpublished paper received through personal correspondence, Univ. of Tulsa, 1978). A different finding is provided by Sermat, who concluded that lonely individuals have difficulty reciprocating appropriate relational behaviors. The result is an unsatisfactory network of relationships, or support systems; Vello Sermat, "Satisfaction in Different Types of Interpersonal Relationships, Willingness to Take Social Risks, and Loneliness," (Paper presented to the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979).

[56]S. M. Dornbusch and S. F. Miyamoto, "A Test of Interactionist Hypotheses of Self-Conception," The American Journal of Sociology, 61 (March 1956): Manford H. Kuhn and T.S.McPartlant, "An Empirical Investigation of Self-Attitudes," American Sociological Review, 19 (February 1954); R. D. Laing, A.R. Lee, and H. Phillipson, Interpersonal Perception: A Theory and a Method of Research , (New York: Perennial Library, Harper and Row, 1970); E. L. Quarantelli and J. Cooper, "Self-Conceptions and Others: A Further Test of Meadian Hypotheses, "Sociological Quarterly, 7 (Summer 1966); and M. Rosenberg, "Which Significant Others?" in Linking Social Structure and Personality, ed. G. H. Elder, Jr., (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973).

[57]Perlman and Peplau, "Social Psychology," p. 22; and Wood, p. 12.

[58]See Jones, et al., p. 31.

[59]Sermat, p. 2.

[60]Wood, pp. 10-15.

[61]Woman's Group on Public Welfare, Loneliness: A New Study (Bedford Square, London: Bedford Square Press, 1972) p. 15.

[62]Paloutzian and Ellison, p. 3; Shaver and Rubenstein, "Effects", p. 2.

[63]See Sermat; and Wood, p. 10.

[64]Marchall Prisbell, "Feeling Good: Conceptualization and Measurement," (Paper presented to the Western Speech Communication Association, Los Angeles, Feb. 1979), p. 17.

[65]Nerviana and Gross, p. 483.

[66]Russell, et al., "Developing," p. 6.

[67]Hal R. Witteman and Peter A. Andersen, "A Barrier to Diffusion: Communication Apprehension as a Predictor of Opinion Leadership and Innovativeness," (Paper presented to the Western Speech Communication Association Convention, Los Angeles, CA: February 1979), pp. 1-2.

[68]James McCroskey, "Oral Communication Apprehension: A Summary of Recent Theory and Research, "Human Communication Research, 4 (Fall 1977), p. 80.

[69]James McCroskey, "Validity of the PCRA as an Indes of Oral Communication Apprehension," Communication Monographs, 45 (August 1978), pp. 198-199.

[70]Judee K. Burgoon, "The Unwillingness-To-Communicate Scale: Development and Validation," Communication Monographs, 43 (March 1976), pp. 60-61.

[71]Jones, p. 2

[72]Russell, et al. "Developing," p. 6.

[73]Bragg, p. 2

[74]Michael L. Hecht, "Measures of Communication Satisfaction" Human Communication Research, 4 (Summer 1978) p. 350.

[75]Hecht, p. 351.

[76]Arthur C. Bohart, D. Dianne Landeros, Barbara N. Hewitt, and Audrey Heilman, "Two Methods of Interpersonal Skills Training; Conceptual- versus Response-oriented Approaches," Small Group Behavior, 10 (May 1979), p. 310.

[77]See Kuhn and McPartland; E. R. Mahoney, "The processual Characteristics of Self-Conception," The Sociological Quarterly, 14 (Autumn 1973), pp. 517-533; Cushman and Craig; and Edward M. Bodaken, "An Empirical Test of a Role Enactment Model of Persuasion," Human Communication Research, 2 (Summer 1976).

[78]See J. Archer Jr. and N. Kagan, "Teaching Interpersonal Relationship Skills on Campus: A Pyramid Approach," Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30 (1973) ; D'Augelli, 1973; and Stotlan, et al., 1978.

[79]See Bienvenu: and Holland Baird.

[80]See Dan Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Mary L. Ferguson, "Developing a Measure of Loneliness," Journal of Personality Assessment,42, No. 3 (1978): Dan Russell, Letitia Anne Peplau and Carolyn Cutrona, "Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Studying Loneliness, (Preliminary Report distributed at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979); Solano; and Craig W. Ellison and Raymond F. Paloutzian, "Developing and Abbreviated Loneliness Scale," (Paper presented at the UCLA Conference on Loneliness, May 1979).

[81]Weiss, p. 22.

[82]Jones, p. 1.

[83]Thomas R. Tortoriello and Lynn A. Phelps, "Can Students Apply Interpersonal Theory?" Todays Speech. 23 (Fall 1975).